

PERKINS INSTITUTE AND MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND.

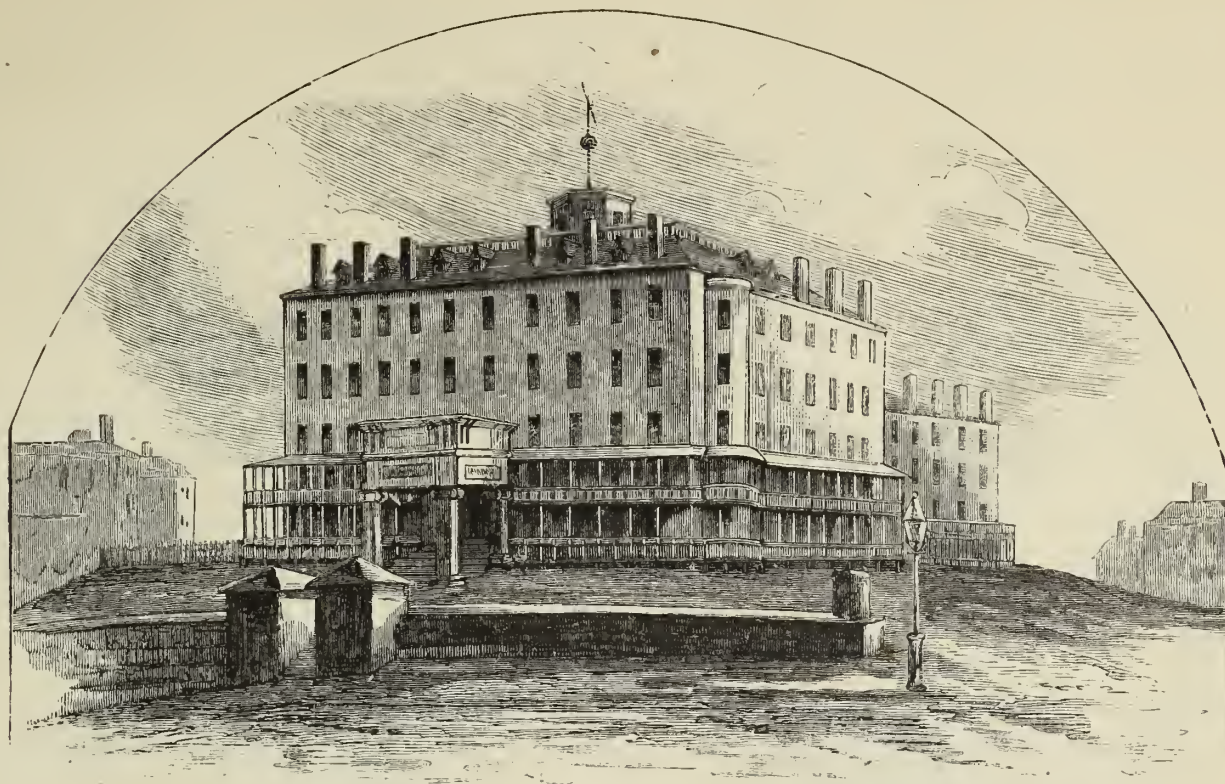
(by: Emma F. Brown)



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AMERICAN PRINTING
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

PERKINS INSTITUTE AND MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

By Emma E. Brown



PERKINS INSTITUTION, BROADWAY, SOUTH BOSTON.

PERKINS INSTITUTION AND MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND.

BY EMMA E. BROWN.

HALF a century or so ago, little "Wide Awakes," if you could have peeped into the windows of a small wooden house on Hollis Street, in Boston, you might have seen two little girls, six and eight years of age, fumbling away over some bits of twine, gummed in the form of letters, upon cardboard.

A funny sort of school-book, wasn't it? But, fifty years ago, this was good Dr. Howe's first method of teaching blind children the alphabet; and just think what a piece of work it must have been to prepare the letters in this way—and all with his own hand!

These two little girls were his first pupils. He found them one day by the roadside, when riding through Andover; and, having obtained their parents' permission, he brought them to his father's house in Boston, and undertook their education.

It seemed, no doubt, to the father and mother, a very hopeless thing to attempt, but the bright, docile children soon caught their teacher's enthu-

siasm; and, in a little while, could tell upon metal types each letter of the alphabet, all the arithmetical figures, and the different marks of punctuation.

Then Dr. Howe gave them some metal frames, perforated with square holes, and on these curious little slates they soon learned to set the types upright, and to spell out "apple," "chair," and other words in common use.

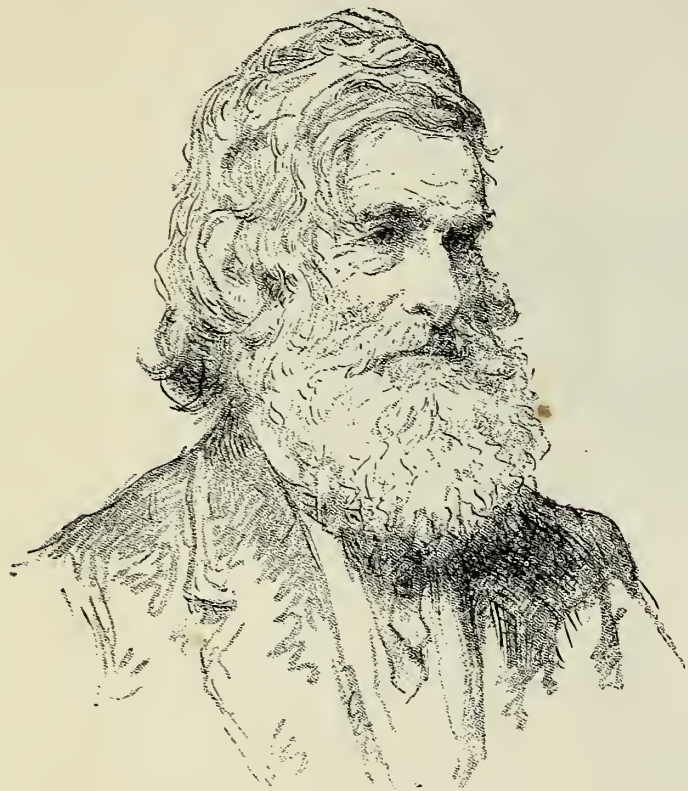
Sheets of stiff pasteboard, marked off with elevated lines, showed the boundaries of countries—just as the colored lines do upon the maps in your Monroe's geography; rough, raised dots indicated ranges of mountains; and pin-heads, big and little, showed them, according to size, the cities and the towns.

Half play and half study it seemed to the two little sisters, as, with tireless patience, their kind teacher led them on.

Soon four other blind children entered the little school on Hollis Street; but Abby and Sophia Carter, now happy, useful women, not only supporting

themselves, but at one time helping their parents by their labor—were the *very first* pupils, let us remember, of the very first American School for the Blind.

And while many kind hearts and many helping hands have carried forward the good work, let us not



DR. SAMUEL G. HOWE.

forget it is to Dr. John D. Fisher, and Dr. Samuel G. Howe, the "Cadmus of the Blind," that the noble Institution really owes its birth!

On the other side the water, in Paris and Berlin, the Abbé Haüy had established some twenty-five years before, a series of Schools for the Blind that already were doing an immense amount of good.

These schools Dr. Fisher visited in his European tour; and he became so deeply interested in them, that when he returned to Boston he at once talked the subject over with his friend, Dr. Howe.

Couldn't something of the kind be done for the blind in our own country?

Well, the strong "will" always does find a "way;" and through the united efforts of these noble-hearted men, a State appropriation for the education of the blind was made in 1829, followed by a charter the next year which incorporated the present Institution.

At first all the money given by the State was the amount left over from the \$6,500 fund for the education of deaf-mutes.

But Dr. Fisher, Dr. Howe and other prominent citizens generously gave what they could, out of their own pockets; Prescott, the blind historian, wrote an affecting appeal in the *North American Review*; and Col. Perkins, the more than princely merchant, finally offered his great beautiful house and grounds on Pearl Street for the use and benefit of the blind, provided the city of Boston would raise \$50,000 for the same purpose.

Ask your grandmothers, little "Wide Awakes" of Boston, if they don't remember that first fancy fair at Faneuil Hall! It was a magnificent response to the appeal for aid, and nearly everybody in Boston contributed either in money or in articles for the sale.

The net results were \$49,000, and it was an easy matter to make up the remaining thousand dollars.

So Col. Perkins gave them his fine old mansion; but, at first, he said the house must always be used as a dwelling and school for the blind, or else be given back to his heirs.

Just think how strange it would seem now to find this great Institution crowded into an old-fashioned country-house, down on noisy Pearl Street.

But Dr. Howe had the eyes of a prophet, and saw, even then, how it might be in the years to come.



STUDYING GEOGRAPHY.

Not long after, the Washington Hotel, an immense building upon Dorchester Heights, came into the market; and when Col. Perkins was told how much better it would be for the Institution to have its location there he generously took away the condition.

And so, out of gratitude, the Trustees resolved to call the school the "Perkins Institution and Massachusetts Asylum (now School) for the Blind."



READING THE BIBLE.

I wonder if you haven't noticed the building when sailing down Boston Harbor. It is so very large, so very white in the sunlight, and stands so very high above its neighbors, that for miles away it is known as a landmark.

But to-day, little "Wide Awakes," Percy and I are going to take a peep inside — wouldn't you like to come, too? This South Boston Broadway car will carry us almost to the door; and as we climb up the long flight of steps I wish you to notice what a beautiful picture is framed in by the tall Grecian pillars at the entrance.

The poor boy who answers our ring turns his face that way, too, as little Percy exclaims: "O, see how blue the water is! I can count twenty, thirty, forty sails! and there is a big steamer coming in!"

Yes, it *is* a broad, grand outlook, but poor blind Henry can never realize anything of its beauty!

Did you ever stop to think what it would be to live in total darkness all the time!

Supposing, some day, when you were playing blindman's buff (playing it "fair," too, so that you couldn't see a thing!) the bandage should suddenly grow to your eyes, and you could never, never take it off!

Your face becomes very sober just at the thought; but here are more than a hundred children to whom

life must be a continual and very serious "blindman's buff!"

Years ago it was thought impossible for a blind person to learn any but the very simplest rudiments of an education; and since there have always been more blind children among the poor than among the rich classes of society, it almost always followed that as they grew up, and no occupation could be found for them, they became, in the end, paupers and beggars — the world over!

Just think what a future to place before a bright, active child — as *wide awake*, mentally, as any of my little readers — albeit his poor eyes were closed, and his horizon forever bounded by his finger-tips!

But in these last fifty years great changes have been wrought; and there are now in the United States twenty-seven public institutions for the education of the blind.

The thorough instruction received in these schools places the pupils above dependence, and upon an almost equal footing, in many branches of industry, with *seeing* workmen!

Little Percy, how-



ever, will understand this better as we go from room to room and see the children at their work, or hear them in their various recitations.

This immense globe in the hall, that is covered all over with "humps," gives us some idea of the way they study their geography lessons; but besides the globes and maps in relief, here are a number of dissected maps

that are as interesting as the puzzle game of "sliced animals."

Shut your eyes, little Percy, and see if you can put together this map of North America. Florida is easy to tell, it is so like an L reversed, and Cuba is a long narrow piece, all by itself; but O! those puzzling Middle and Western States!

Percy gives up in despair, and looks with wondering eyes upon blind Nellie, who puts it all together, quick as a flash, and without a single mistake! Now her

Watch them a moment and you will see.

Here is a long line of pin-heads, and there is another coming to meet it; one side is all crooks and curves, and—why, it is the State of Massachusetts sure enough! Yes; this is the way blind children learn to draw maps; and their bright, happy faces show how much they enjoy the exercise.

And, by the way, did you ever notice how every shade of feeling is expressed on the face of a blind person?

To me it is very beautiful—this utter unconsciousness of other's eyes.

At one of the recesses—and by an excellent arrangement they come every fifty minutes—I stepped into a room where four or five blind girls were busily chatting together; of course they were quite unconscious of my presence till I spoke, and they made such a pretty picture that I stood for a moment watching them. Two were frolicking together—just like all school-girls—but one sat a little apart, holding in her hand a box of bright-colored beads. Every now and then she would hold them close to her left eye; and sometimes she would put them down with a heavy sigh, sometimes with a bright smile. I read her thoughts without a question, so perfectly was her mind photographed upon her face.

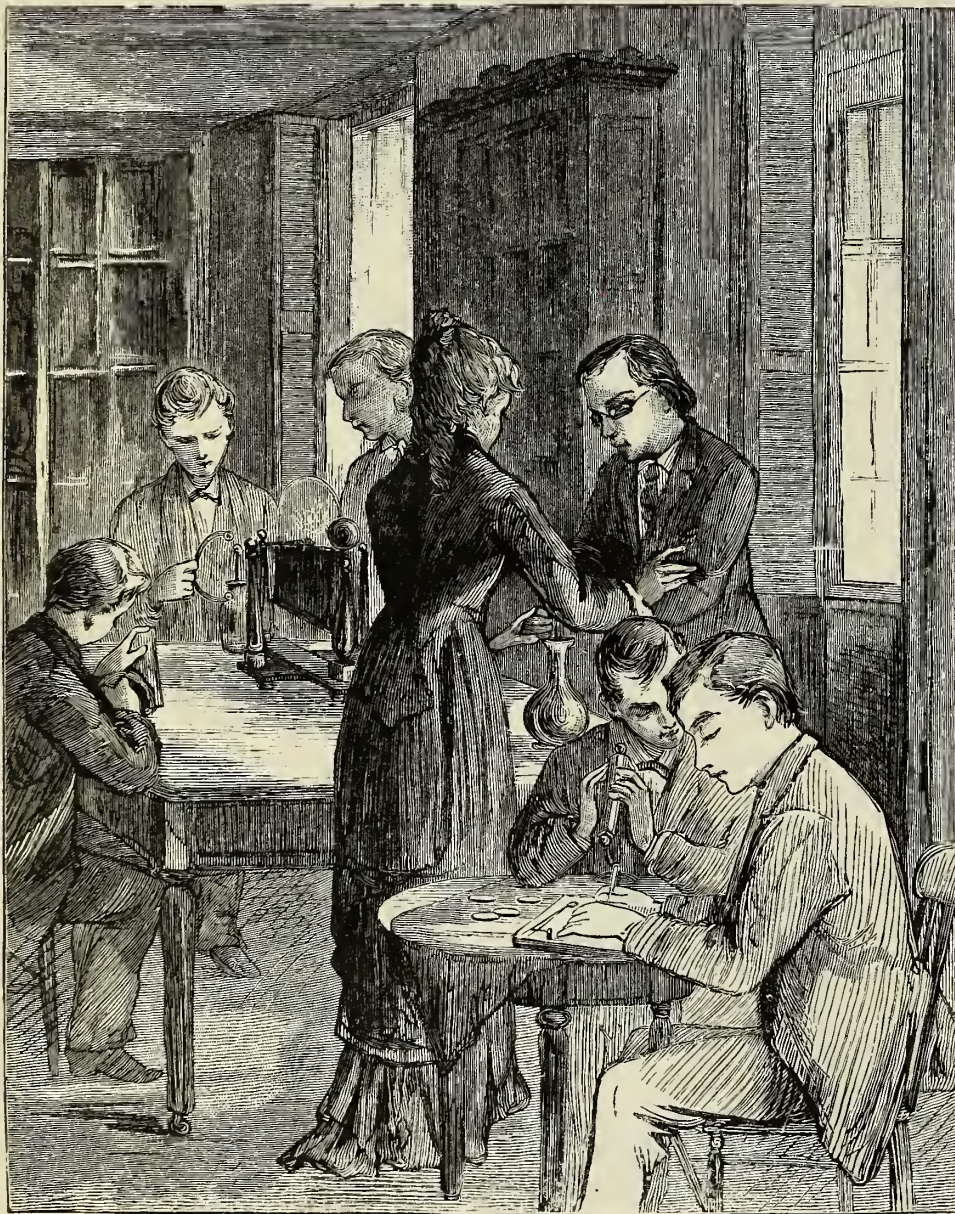
Sight was returning—but O! so slowly. And the one delight of her life was to test the precious, priceless gift. "I can just see a bit of light," she said when I spoke to her, "and now and then a little color; perhaps I shall see as well as anybody sometime!"

Another young girl in the little group, who has been for some four years in the Institution, gives me a very interesting account of their home life.

"You know we girls all live in these cottages; and it is ever so much nicer than it used to be when there was only the one big building. There are four cottages just like this one, and we have a parlor and dining-room in each house. Our sleeping-rooms are on the second floor; if the matron is willing I will show you mine."

And a pretty, sunny room it was, with its bright carpet and neat furniture.

"I make the bed myself, and take the whole care



STUDYING PHILOSOPHY.

teacher sends her to the map on the wall, and from Maine to California her nimble little fingers travel like so many eyes. The capitals and the mountain ranges she knows by the big pins and the raised lines; then the rivers are all cut out in little grooves, and she can easily trace them from the source to the mouth.

But what are all these little folks doing with cushions?

of my room ; we learn a good deal in this way about housekeeping.

"There are forty-two girls here now, so we have about ten in each cottage, and it seems just like home, we have such good times together. We rise about six in the morning, sometimes a little earlier in summer, and we breakfast at seven ; then we have a little time to look after our rooms, and if it is a pleasant day we usually take a walk before school-time.

"We do not go to the large building to study ; for, you see, we have a school-house all to ourselves ; and that long gallery you came through is where we walk at recess and exercise in stormy weather.

"At quarter of one the bell rings for us to put away our books and get ready for dinner. In the afternoon we have another school session, but it is not so long as in the morning, and we spend a part of each day in our work-room, sewing and knitting.

"Every evening we have reading aloud in the parlors, and we enjoy that ever so much."

But the bell rings, and, with a smiling "good-bye" the girls return to their studies. We go back to the large building, and Henry, whose bright, intelligent face we shall not soon forget, takes down his big Bible and opens it at random :

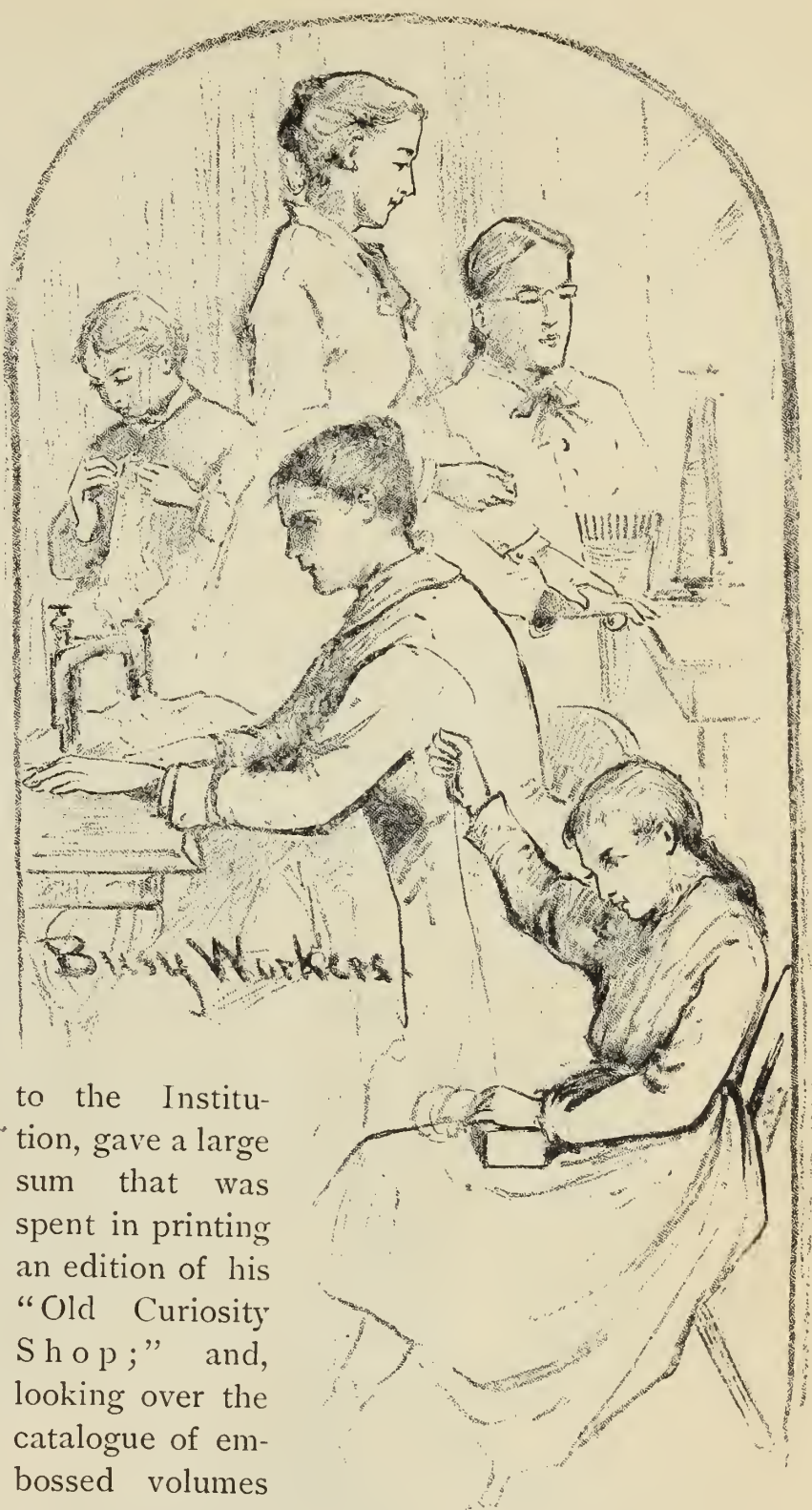
"*'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, . . . for the former things are passed away !'*"

O, with what a radiant face and touching emphasis he reads the beautiful verses ! Does he realize their prophetic import, I wonder ?

You notice it is the last volume of a series from which he is reading ; for, although the bulk of Bible printing for the blind has been diminished one-half through the efforts of Dr. Howe, it still requires several large volumes to contain all the Scriptures in embossed letters.

The generous donations of various Bible Societies now make it possible to give every blind person a copy of the precious book ; but whenever a recipient dies the Bible is sent back to the Institution to be lent again, and so handed down from one generation to another.

It was the Abbé Haüy who invented these raised letters ; but Dr. Howe devised the angular type, which is much easier for the blind to read ; and all his life he labored constantly to increase the number of books printed for the blind. Dickens, after his visit



to the Institution, gave a large sum that was spent in printing an edition of his "Old Curiosity Shop ;" and, looking over the catalogue of embossed volumes now printed at

South Boston we find, not only a goodly list of school-books, but Milton's "Paradise Lost," and "Regained," Shakespeare's "Hamlet" and "Julius Cæsar," together with selections from Pope, Baxter, Swedenborg and Byron.

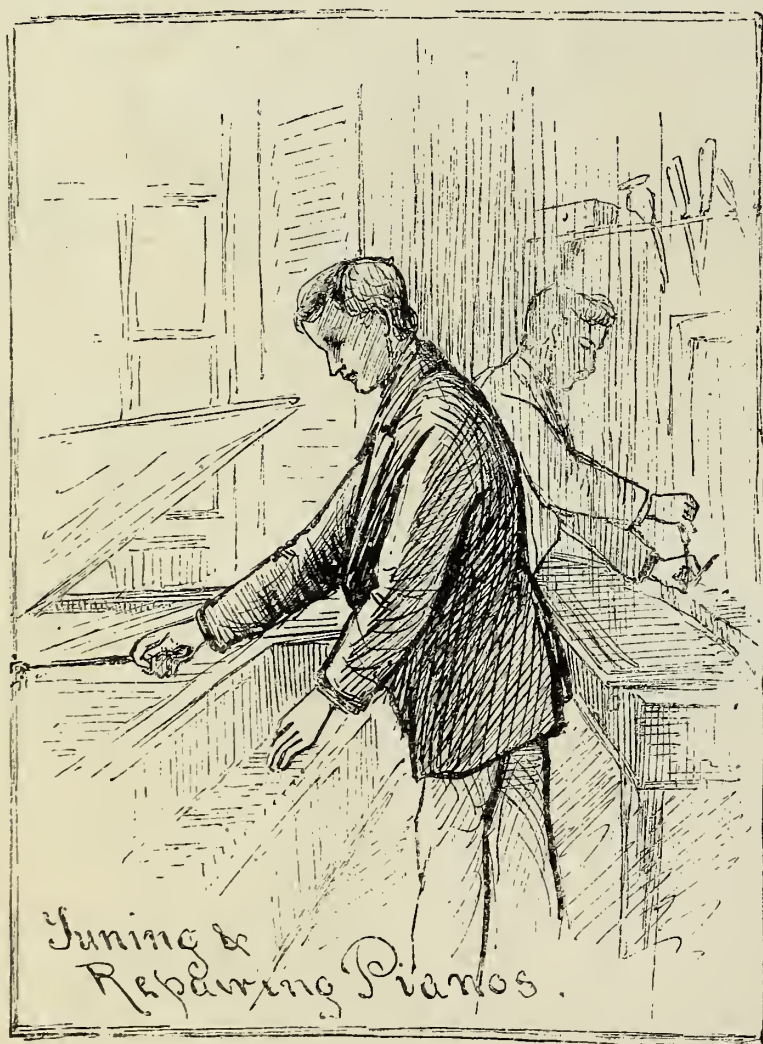
The "Howe Memorial Fund," to which a liberal donation has been made this past year, and to which is added all the proceeds from the sale of Dr. Howe's Memoir, is to promote the increase of these embossed books for the blind ; and so to carry out, as far as possible, one of the last wishes of Dr. Howe.

Beside the ordinary method of printing for the

blind, there is Moon's Alphabetic System, which is very helpful to blind persons whose touch is too hardened to distinguish finer letters; and the Braille system, which is also used for common hand-writing among the blind, and for musical notation.

In the grammar exercises to-day, you will notice, little Percy, what an ingenious contrivance it is — this Braille system of point-writing.

It has long been used in Great Britain and all over Europe; and three kinds of tablets have been invented, one of which, called the "Daisy," is just a little frame that looks like a slate, and a brass block one inch square, in which six points are grouped. This block travels over the slate on two steel rods, on one of which is a ratchet which spaces the letters, and then there is a third rod that spaces the lines. The letters are produced by placing the finger upon the keys which, by a slight pressure, force the points through the paper; so, by this means, the writer can make a whole "character" in the Braille "short-hand," in the time required to "prick" a sin-



gle point by the old style "French tablet."

It is said that Edison has just invented something even better than this; he calls it the "blind writing

ink;" and as he dips his pen into the strange fluid, and carries it across a sheet of paper, the marks left are of a grayish white. In about a minute after, the writing swells up and hardens, until it becomes quite perceptibly elevated above the paper. Mr. Edison



THREADING A NEEDLE.

says, however, that he does not yet feel quite satisfied with the preparation, 'as with further experiment he thinks he can make the elevation still more marked.

O, this wonderful sense of touch! Why, it is almost like having eyes at one's finger-tips.

Here are some young girls doing a long example in square root; the queer little slates they use look like printer's cases, and the little nickel types travel over the boards just about as fast as chalk lines over the black-board.

Isabel Romily, a very intelligent colored girl, gives us an excellent recitation in physiology, and takes to pieces a model of the human figure to prove what she has told us of the digestive organs.

But it is in Miss Shattuck's recitation-room that our wonder and admiration reach a crisis. What! is it possible that the blind can be taught the mysteries of Natural Philosophy? Just listen to the recitation upon "Light: its laws and phenomena," from this class of boys!

With intelligent fingers they handle the philosophical apparatus, and, as they cannot watch, like seeing pupils, each other's explanations, a part take the prism — as you will notice at the right hand of our picture, — while the others stand about the table.

The course of study at the Institution is now so extended that when a pupil graduates it is with a degree of knowledge quite equal to that obtained in our public schools and private academies.

The one hundred and twenty-six boys and girls (the Institution would accommodate many more) now enrolled as pupils, are divided, according to their degree of progress, into eleven classes — experience showing that fifteen or sixteen blind children are quite as many as can profitably be taught together. Of the thirty-six officers of the Institution, there are, in the literary department, seven teachers, all ladies;

and no one can listen to the different recitations without being strongly impressed with the hearty enthusiasm, rare sympathy, and ready tact displayed in their methods of teaching.

Upon the Director, Mr. Anagnos, the mantle of Dr. Howe, his father-in-law, has indeed fallen; and throughout the Institution his cheery hopefulness and his earnest, devoted spirit are continually reflected.

The literary course embraces reading in a variety of raised characters, spelling, writing with a lead-pencil in the square hand, also in Braille's point-system, geography (civil and physical), arithmetic (mental and with type-boards), algebra, geometry,

history (ancient, mediæval and modern), grammar, rhetoric, composition, English literature, civil government, natural history, physics, anatomy and physiology, mental philosophy and Latin.

But besides the literary department, there are three others, the musical, the tuning and the technical.

It is, very naturally, in music that the blind especially delight; and, indeed, they really labor under no disadvantage here; for although the contrivance of embossed notes can never equal those read by sight, yet in quickness and delicacy of ear, and in a peculiarly nice sense of "time," the blind seem more gifted than those who are blessed with sight.

There are five resident teachers, with one assistant,



THE BOYS' WORK-ROOM.

in the musical department; and all these, with one exception, are graduates of the school. Then there are three music-readers employed, and the services of three eminent professors who are not resident; so you see the Perkins Institution offers unusual facilities for obtaining a thorough musical education; and it is very interesting to walk through the upper rooms where the numerous pianos are distributed.

Especial attention is given to the tuning department; indeed, seven of the pianos are kept just for dissection; and, after seeing how thoroughly these blind pupils understand the instrument they handle, you will never be afraid to trust your own piano to

the care of such a professional tuner. Last year the contract for the tuning and the small repairs of the city pianos in the public schools of Boston, was given to graduates of this department of the Institution; and the work gave so much satisfaction that the same contract has been renewed for the present year. This is a very marked recognition of the ability and proficiency of blind tuners, and we trust the example of the school committee of Boston will be followed by those of other cities.

After listening with delight to a blind boy's performance upon the piano, we went down into the large hall or chapel. Here there is a fine organ;

and here the orchestra of twenty-five pieces will give you as fine a selection of music as you heard at the Thomas concert.

But all cannot be musicians; and there is one bright sunny room in this great building where cheery Mr. Wright and his assistants teach the boys how to make brooms and how to seat chairs.

I shall never forget how pleasant that long working-room looked, with its windows full of thrifty house-plants, and its busy, happy workers scattered about like so many bees!

The girls have a work-room, too; and I wish you could see how fast their fingers fly through the meshes of crotchet, and how deftly they thread a needle with the tips of their tongues.

They do all manner of pretty things, too, in bead-work and bright-colored worsteds; and, what is of more importance, they can run knitting and sewing machines as fast and accurately as anybody.

Most of the articles manufactured by the girls are sold, either to persons attending the weekly sale, on Thursdays, when the Institution is open to visitors, or to customers at the store on Avon Street, in Boston.

At this salesroom in the city may also be found mattresses, feather-beds, entry-mats, brooms, etc., all made by the blind. Orders are taken here, too, for upholstering furniture, re-seating cane-bottomed chairs and renovating old mattresses and feather-beds.

All the proceeds go, not to the Institution, but to the blind themselves.

I think one secret of the dexterity of the blind children here, certainly of their ease of movement and good carriage, is owing to the daily exercise they take in the gymnasium; and it is a pretty sight to see the girls in their neat uniforms go through the various exercises.

How they keep in line is a mystery; but I suppose it is due to their exquisite sense of touch and hearing, and still more to the excellent training power of their teacher.

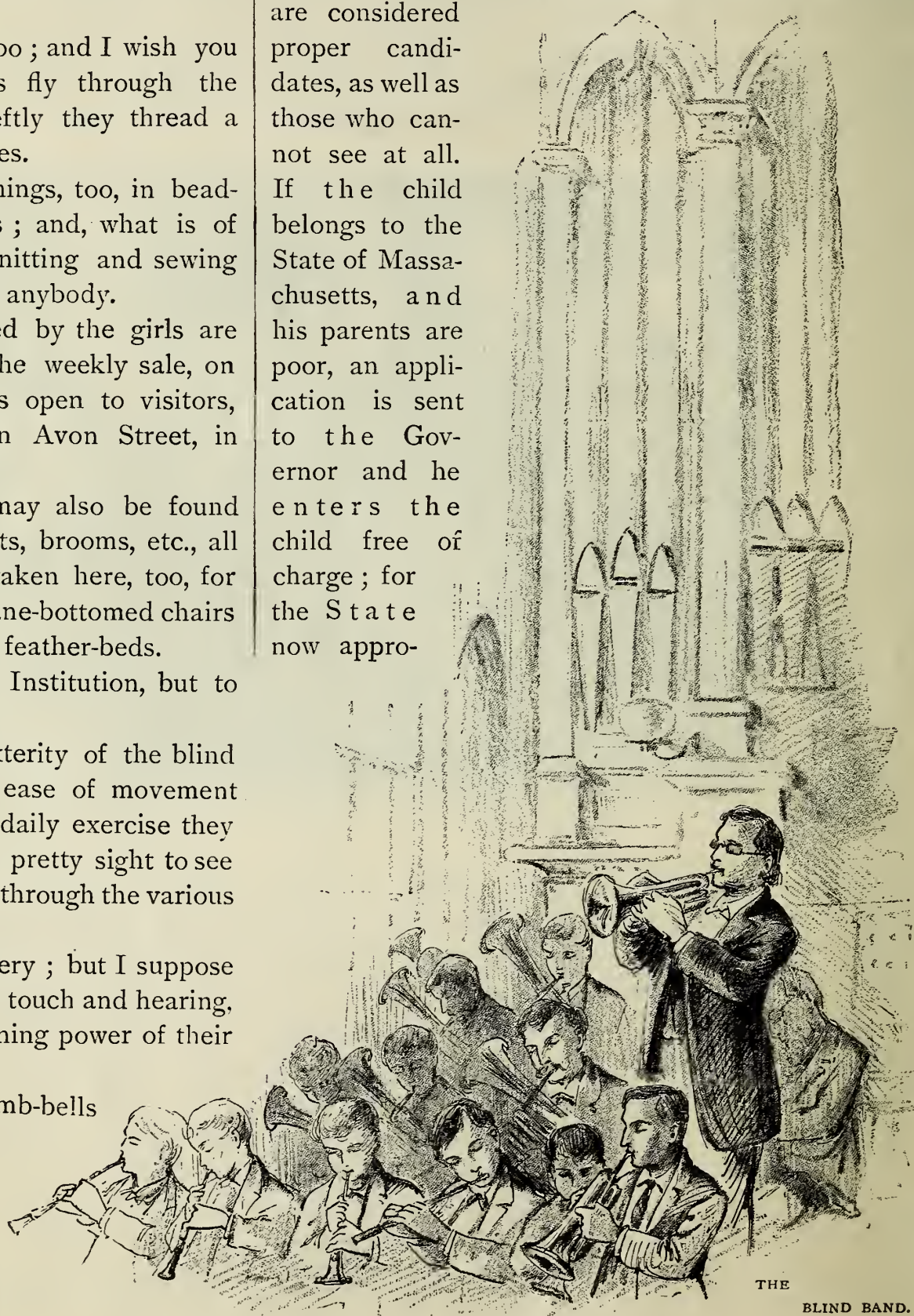
Rings, wands, and wooden dumb-bells they use with all the ease of a Dio Lewis graduate.

Of course the boys have other and more vigorous exercises; and now that the new gymnasium is completed there will be given

still better opportunities of developing bone and muscle.

The terms of admission to the Institution are as follows:

All children and youth of average health and strength, and good morals, who are so deficient in sight that they cannot distinguish printed letters one-eighth of an inch square, or those whose eyes are in such a condition that they cannot be used in reading without danger of the total loss of sight, are considered proper candidates, as well as those who cannot see at all. If the child belongs to the State of Massachusetts, and his parents are poor, an application is sent to the Governor and he enters the child free of charge; for the State now appro-



THE
BLIND BAND.

priates \$30,000 every year for the education of such children, and several legacies from private individuals have recently been received by the Institution. The



God is love, & truth
Laura G. Bridgman.

terms of admission to other pupils are \$300.00 per annum, which includes all expenses except clothing.

The best age for admission is between nine and sixteen, and the usual period of stay is from five to seven years.

The Institution is not an *asylum* but a *school*; and the adult blind persons who work in the shop live in lodgings of their own or in boarding-houses near by.

I suppose there is scarcely one of my little "Wide Awakes" who has not heard about Laura Bridgman, but I cannot close this long story of the Perkins Institution without telling you of our pleasant talk with her.

You know she is not only blind but deaf and dumb too, and her senses of smell and taste are very blunt; but her touch! why, that is like five senses in one.

Good, kind, noble Dr. Howe! It was he who took her, when she was a little girl, and let down the magic cord that brought her out of darkness into light.

She is forty-nine years of age now, and when you read the book that one of her teachers has written about her, you will understand how it is she has learned to do so much.

With anyone who knows the deaf and dumb alphabet she can carry on a long conversation; for the letters are made right in the palm of her hand.

Such a sweet, gentle face as she has! Why, your pity changes—now into love, now into admiration, as you watch her expressive countenance.

Shall I tell you what message she sent my little readers? She expresses herself strangely sometimes, but these are just her very words:

"Tell the children I want them to enjoy themselves in the presence of Christ—

"Heaven is wide awake!"

THE CHILD RAPHAEL.

BY MARGARET J. PRESTON.

I know you have heard the story,
And gotten the name by heart,
Of one of the grand Old Masters—
They call him "The Prince of Art"—

Who painted the purest pictures—
Christs of the gentlest mien,

And the loveliest Virgin Mothers,
That ever the world has seen.

What vision suggested the graces
That o'er his Madonnas shine?
And where could he find a baby
To paint, that was so divine?

And whence had he skill to do it?
And how did he come to know,



Better than all the Masters,
Why he should paint them so?

You haven't discovered the reason?
Then listen; and if you'll try
To follow my little story,
I think I can tell you why.

—In an old Italian city,
Urbino, the queer and quaint,
There lived Giovanni Santi,
An artist who loved to paint —

Like all of those famous Masters,
Whom faith in the Church beguiled —
Still over and over, the faces
Of the Mother and Holy Child.

And when he had need of models,
What models so sweet could be
To *him*, as his beautiful Magia,*
With her baby upon her knee?

And so she was called "Madonna"
(For whom she so oft sufficed);
And so they nicknamed her baby
Raphael, the "Infant Christ."

Ah, surely, a tender shadow
Would temper the mother's joy
Whenever the father painted
A halo about the boy,

For fear, in the life before him,
Her Raphael, — who could tell? —
Might learn of the cross's burden,
And the thorn and the nail as well!

And, surely, a mystic radiance
Over the boy would shine
As he thought they had deemed him worthy
To image the Child Divine!

No wonder *he* walked exulting
Through all of his happy years!
No wonder *she* looked celestial
As seen through his orphan tears!

The memory that filled his childhood,
On his canvas left its trace;
For each of his sweet Madonnas
Holds hints of his mother's face.

*The mother of Raphael.

